

Do Not Be Overly Righteous (?)
(Ecclesiastes 7:7-22)

I. Pits On the Road, 7:7-10

7: two dangers –

- Oppression destroys reason
 - Oppressed man loses his head
 - ‘Drives the wise into madness’ (ESV)
- Bribery debases (corrupts) the heart

A present [bribe] is a precious stone in the eyes of its possessor; wherever he turns, he prospers – Prov.17:8.

8: better things –

- End (outcome) is better than beginning
 - 5: hearing a rebuke...good results
 - Trying times can be worth it, Ja.1:2-4
- Patient in spirit better than proud

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall – Prov.16:18.

- Adversity builds patience.
- Adversity is hardest; waiting is second.
- Gn.15 . . . 22

9: danger of anger

- Hasty anger may become deep-seated resentment.

Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled – Heb.12:15.

²⁶ “Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, ²⁷ nor give place to the devil – Eph.4

10: good ole days

- Present troubles make the past seem attractive.
- If satisfied with the past, we lose power for the present.

I. Pits On the Road, 7:7-10

II. Protection For The Road,
7:11-12

11: Wisdom is as good as an inheritance (ASV)

- Paraphrase: 'Wisdom is even better when you have money.' Prov.3:13-18.

12: Wisdom...light in world of darkness

- A defense (shade); an advantage to its possessor. 1 K.3:6-9.
 - Job: attacked in body, then in faith
- Gives life (see things in different light).

For whoever finds me finds life, and
obtains favor from the LORD – Prov.8:35

I. Pits On the Road, 7:7-10

II. Protection For Road, 7:11-12

III. Prosperity and Adversity
on the Road, 7:13-14

13: compare 1:15

- Crooked (afflictions and adversities): some question God

14: God is in control; good and bad serve His higher purposes.

For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness – Hb.12:10

13-14:

- **In prosperity:** be joyful and grateful; enjoy it, Ja.1:17.
- **In adversity:** time for solemn reflection: wait on God; learn from whatever comes (patience).
 - We can't figure it all out. (Job)
 - We can trust Him. 1 Pt.5:7

I. Pits On the Road, 7:7-10

II. Protection For Road, 7:11-12

III. Prosperity and Adversity,
7:13-14

IV. Perish or Prolong Life
on the Road, 7:15-18

15: cynicism grows in logic of secular system

- Good man perishes *in [spite of]* his righteousness. Ac.7
- Wicked prolongs life *in [spite of]* his wickedness. Ro.2:4
 - God's longsuffering leads to repentance.
 - Do we trust God or not?
 - Do not judge by externals. Ps.37

16-18: passage does NOT teach . . .

- Since being righteous or wicked does not guarantee longer / shorter life, don't be extreme.
- Choose the “golden mean”
- Sin moderately
- “Nothing too much”

¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

¹⁷ For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked – Rv.3

16: don't be overly righteous / wise??

(Self-righteous)

- Don't get so caught up in 'heavenly things' that you are worthless on earth.
- Condemns Pharisaical self-righteousness.

²⁰ For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven –Mt.5

16: don't be overly righteous / wise??

- Don't get so caught up in 'heavenly things' that you are worthless on earth.
- Condemns Pharisaical self-righteousness.

²³ Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

²⁴ Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! – Mt.23

16: don't be overly righteous / wise??

- Don't get so caught up in 'heavenly things' that you are worthless on earth.
- Condemns Pharisaical self-righteousness.

³ For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God – Ro.10

16: don't be overly righteous / wise??

- Don't get so caught up in 'heavenly things' that you are worthless on earth.
- Condemns Pharisaical self-righteousness.
- Warns against speculating about God's ways.

⁸ For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways, says the LORD.

⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts – Is.55

16: no one can be too righteous

- Some think God owes them for being 'righteous.'
- NB: If righteousness made us healthy, wealthy, wise, and happy, people would obey gospel for wrong reasons – insurance policy.
- Cf. 8:14. Jer.26.

16: 'to be wise' is reflexive

- *To think oneself to be furnished with wisdom.*
- *Why should you destroy yourself.*
 - Do not be overly dependent on your wisdom or righteousness to guarantee God's blessings.

⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD and depart from evil –Prov.3

¹² ...but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise – 2 Co.10

16: '*to be wise*' is reflexive

- One who trusts his own righteousness will not trust God in bad times.
- One who indulges in wickedness will be condemned.

'Destroy yourself' is reflexive

- If we depend on our own righteousness for prosperity, we may be confounded.
- Righteousness does not guarantee God's blessings (here), 15. 1 K.21.

17: same pattern as 16:

- Do not multiply your wickedness or be a fool
- Uncontrolled sin will not end well.

²³ But You, O God, shall bring them down to the pit of destruction; Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; But I will trust in You – Ps.55

- ‘Fear of God prevents seeking security in our righteousness and wisdom; it prevents indulgence in wickedness and folly.’
- Ja.1:21, overflow of wickedness...

18: 'this' (true wisdom) and 'the other' (folly of fools)

- Fear of God protects us from absurd extremes:
 1. Trusting our righteousness and wisdom to save us.
 2. Rationalizing sin away because some wicked do not get what they deserve.
- Learn to fear Him (true wisdom).

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction – Prov.1:7

I. Pits On the Road, 7:7-10

II. Protection For Road, 7:11-12

III. Prosperity / Adversity, 7:13f.

IV. Perish or Prolong Life, 7:15ff.

V. Power of Wisdom, 7:19-22

19: wisdom in fear of God surpasses
ten rulers (experienced leaders)

- Ten = completeness. Dn.1,2,3,6 . . .

20: echoes Solomon's prayer, 1 K.8:46

- No one is without fault. Ro.3:9-20.
- Wisdom reveals our faults, gives the way out. 2 Sm.16:5-14. Ps.38:12-15.

21: foolish to be overly concerned about what others say and think...

- We can't please everyone.
- Don't eavesdrop...

22: sin is easier to see in others

- We have done it too. Mt.7:1-2.

Conclusion

1. “Among wise men, the wisest knows that he knows least; among fools, the most foolish thinks he knows most” – de Guevara
2. “What do you want?”
3. “The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why” – Mark Twain